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ABSTRACT

The hypothesis that children are placed at increased risk for adjustment problems when parents divorce and remarry was tested with a sample of 206 boys in the fourth grade. It was also hypothesized that the relation of parenting transitions and boys' adjustment would be mediated by family management practices. Subjects attended schools in neighborhoods with a relatively high incidence of juvenile delinquency. A child adjustment construct was calculated from seven constructs: antisocial behavior, drug sampling, peer rejection, deviant peer association, poor academic skills, poor self-esteem, and depression. This global adjustment construct was plotted for four groups of subjects: (1) two biological parents; (2) single mothers; (3) stepfather families; and (4) single mother and stepfather families. All other family types were excluded. Boys' adjustment was found to be related in a linear manner to the number of parental transitions. Boys in families who had experienced two or more transitions were at especially high risk for poor adjustment and later delinquency. The relation of child adjustment to parental transitions was partly accounted for by socioeconomic status and mediated by reduced parental monitoring. (RH)

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The relation of parenting transitions to boys' adjustment problems.

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Summary

It has been hypothesized that children are placed at increased risk for adjustment problems with the parental transitions of divorce and remarriage, and that this increase is cumulative according to the number of transitions experienced (Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986).

This hypothesis was tested with a sample of 206 4th grade boys from the Oregon Youth Study and their parents. The boys attended schools in neighborhoods with a high incidence of juvenile delinquency for the medium-sized metropolitan area. Study families were predominantly white and lower or working class. Each of the key concepts of child adjustment and family management was defined by multi-method/agent assessments.

A child adjustment construct was calculated from 7 constructs; antisocial behavior, drug sampling, peer rejection, deviant peer association, poor academic skills, poor self-esteem and depression. This global adjustment construct was plotted for four groups of subjects defined by parenting transitions since the boys' birth: two biological parents (0 transitions); single mothers (1 transition); stepfather families (2 transitions); single mother and stepfather families (3+ transitions). All other family types were excluded.

Boys' adjustment was found to be linearly related to the number of parental transitions, with boys in families who had experienced 2 or more transitions being especially at high risk for poor adjustment, and also for delinquency measured 3-4 years later.

It was also hypothesized that the relation of parenting transitions and boys' adjustment would be mediated by family management practices. A structural equation model, controlling for socio-economic status, showed that the relation of child adjustment to parental transitions was best described as being mediated by reduced parental monitoring and supervision.

It was concluded that boys from single mother families per se are not the most at risk for poor adjustment, rather, boys from families who have been through two or more parenting transitions. In addition, the relation between boys' adjustment and transitions was found to be partly accounted for by SES, and mediated by parental monitoring practices.

PS 018138

Furstenberg F. F. & Seltzer, J. A. (1986). Divorce and child development. IN Sociological Studies of Child Development: Vol. 1 (pp. 137-160). New York: JAI Press Inc.

Bentler P. M. (1985). Theory and implementation of EQS: a structural equations program. Los Angeles: CA: BMDP Statistical Software, INC.

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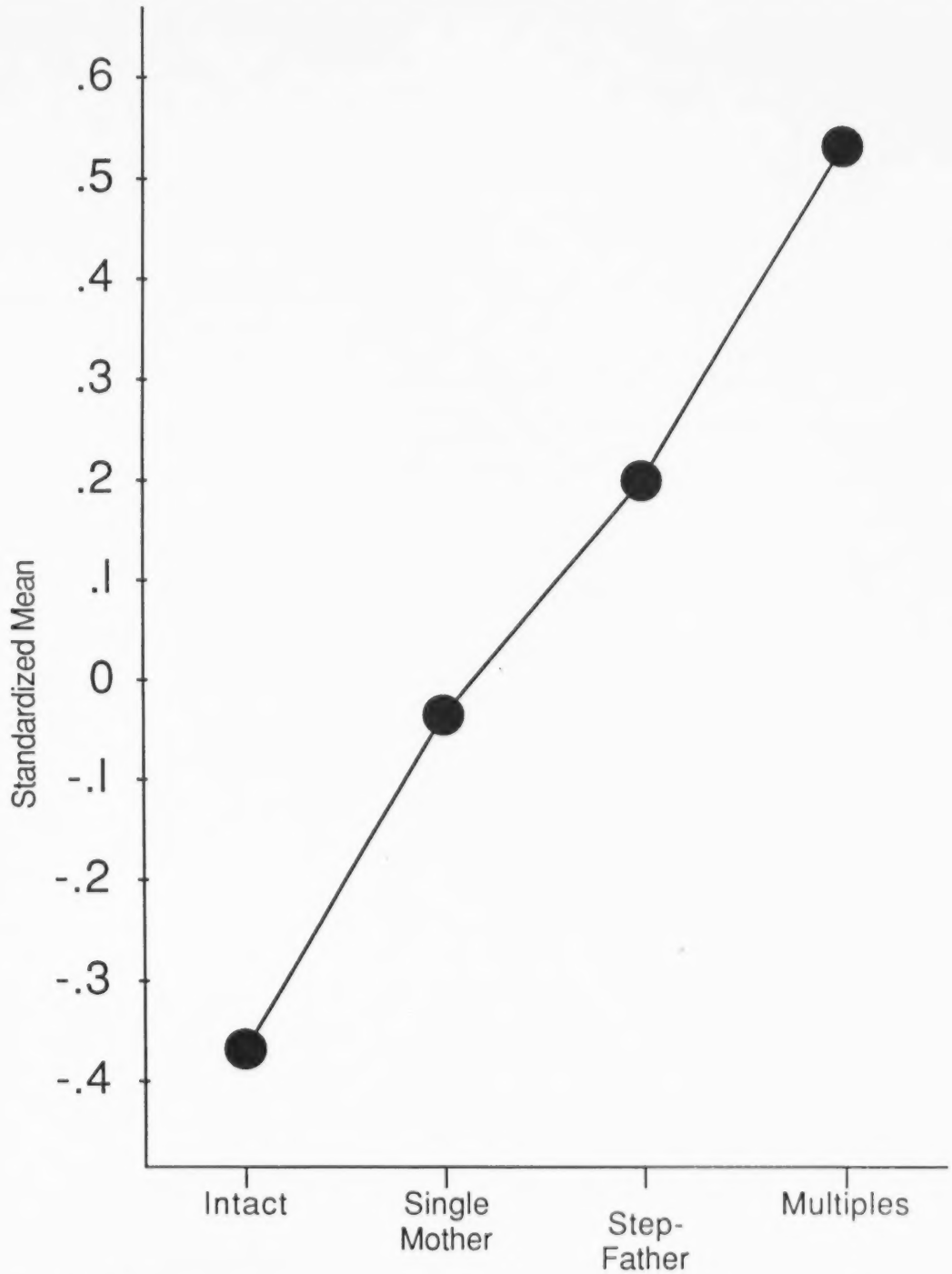
Boys' Risk for Poor Adjustment by Parenting Transitions



# Transitions:	0	1	2	3+
N	(80)	(31)	(24) 9	(34)

(RISK SCORE is the mean of 7 adjustment variables: Antisocial behavior drug sampling, deviant peer associates, peer rejection, poor academic skills, low self-esteem, and depression.)

Means of Child Adjustment Variables by Number of Family Transitions

Number of transitions	0	1	2	3+
Family type	Intact	Single-mother	Step-father	Multiple transitions
N	79	28	28	34
Peer relations	.21	.11	-.15	-.23
Deviant peers	-.22	-.08	.05	.40
Drug sampling	-.20	.04	-.02	.26
Antisocial behavior	-.16	.06	.12	.14
Academic achievement	.21	.19	-.22	-.37
Self-Esteem	.13	-.10	-.10	-.23
Depression	-.16	-.10	.18	.15
Delinquency*	11%	23%	38%	32%

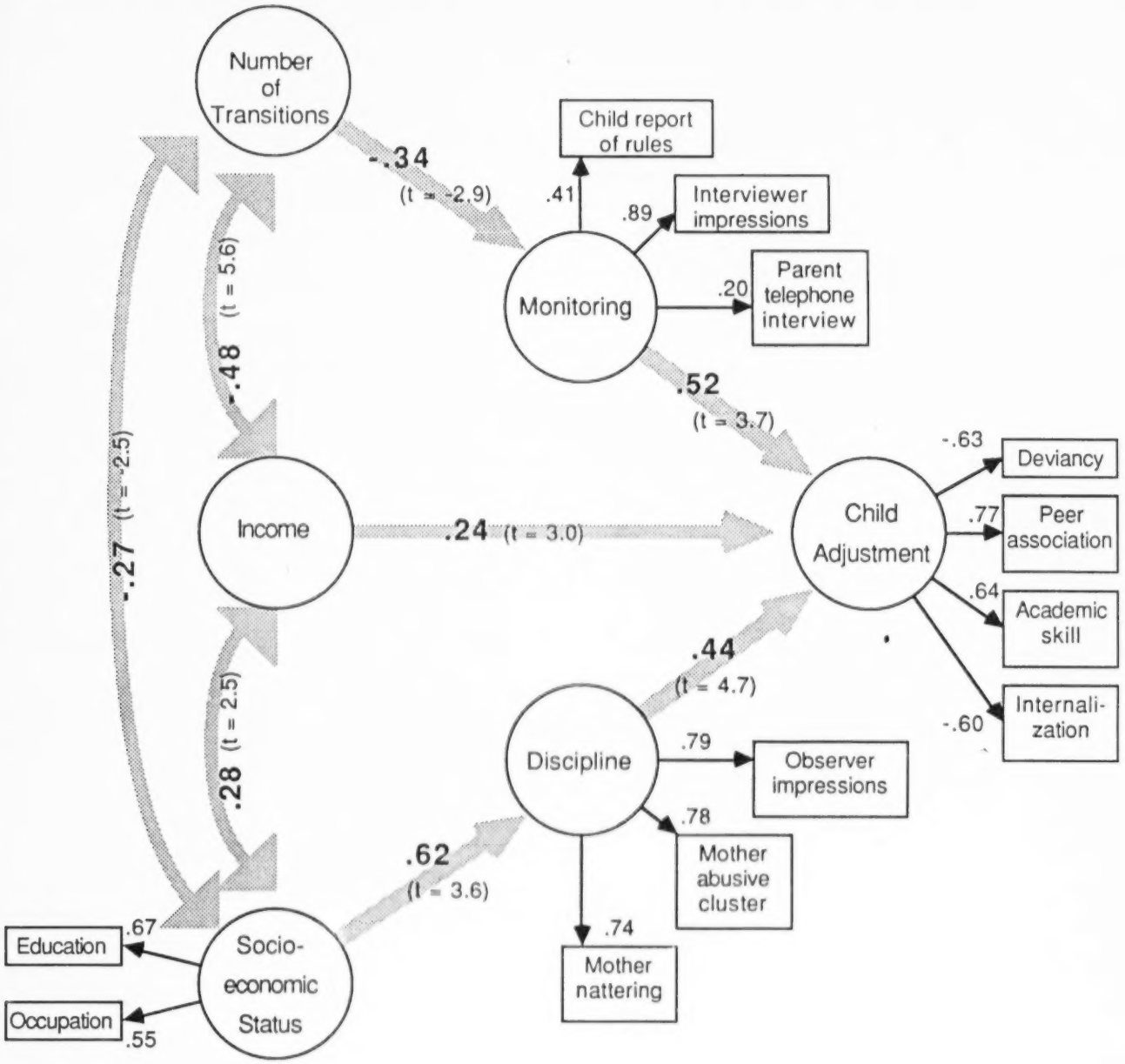
Note: Figures are means of standardized scores

*Arrest records 3 - 4 years after youth entered study

Means of Family-Management Practices by Number of Family Transitions

Number of transitions	0	1	2	3+
		Single-	Step-	Multiple
Family type	Intact	mother	father	transitions
N	80	31	29	34
Monitoring	.13	.15	-.29	-.08
Discipline	.11	-.03	-.06	-.21

Note: Figures are means of standardized scores



R's Between Latent Constructs from Measurement Model

	#Trans	Income	SES	Monitoring	Discipline	Child Adj.
#Transitions	—					
Income	-.48	—				
SES	-.19	.17	—			
Monitoring	-.30	.11	.18	—		
Discipline	-.23	.28	.54	.24	—	
Child Adjustment	-.45	.41	.49	.57	.58	—